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Paul Rusesabagina, Inspiration Behind Film “Hotel Rwanda,” Brings Message of Hope to Lawrence University

Posted on: April 18th, 2011 by Rick Peterson

The man whose courage during the horrific 1994 Rwandan genocide inspired the Academy Award-nominated film “Hotel Rwanda” brings his message of hope, peace and “never again” to the Lawrence University campus.

Paul Rusesabagina presents “A Lesson to be Learned” Monday, April 25 at 7 p.m. in Stansbury Theatre of the Music-Drama Center.



Paul Rusesabagina

Portrayed by actor Don Cheadle in the film, Rusesabagina, 56, is credited with saving the lives of more than 1,200 people during the 100-day killing spree by Rwandan Hutu extremists. As the manager of the Hotel des Mille Collines in Kigali, Rusesabagina bravely risked his life to shelter and protect those who were seeking refuge from the genocide that killed more than 800,000 people.

Rusesabagina's life-changing journey from hotel manager to humanitarian has been recognized with numerous prestigious awards, among them the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the National Civil Rights Museum Freedom Award and the Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience Award.

He retraces his accidental path to heroism and the 100 days in which he was the only thing standing between his "guests" and death and his subsequent life as a refugee and activist in the autobiography, "An Ordinary Man," which he co-wrote with 1991 Lawrence University graduate Tom Zoellner. In 2005, he founded the Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation to provide support, care and educational assistance for orphans of Africa's civil wars, genocide and AIDS epidemic.